Nyambi's formal permission to install the heir as Cimombo. 622 Nyambi told them to start preparing malt for the 'beer of succession' and to tell him when it was ready. Kaukutu then sent a man to Cholo on a bicycle to call Cimombo back to the village. One Tuesday, the day after Cimombo returned, Kaukutu reported to Nyambi, who told him to tell the women to prepare the beer, since the installation ceremony would take place on Saturday. Nyambi sent his perpetual sons Makoka and Ncimba to officiate on his behalf. These two men were important village headmen, Makoka having the right to wear a scarlet headband though Ncimba had not.

On Thursday, Makoka and Ncimbo came to a place about three miles from the village. They had four women with them, one of whom carried a sacred basket (*ciselo cambepesi*). Ncimbo sent a message to Kaukutu to say that they were waiting, and he told the heir that he was wanted along the road where a meeting was being held. When the women saw Kaukutu and the heir coming to the place where Makoka and Ncimbo were waiting, they ran to hide in the bush. The heir sat down under a mango tree and Makoka went up to him and begged for some snuff. Before he had time to take the snuff bottle out of his pocket, the women came out of the bush, Makoka got up and struck the heir on the forehead with his fist, knocking him to the ground, took some flour from the sacrifice basket and sprinkled it on the heir, shouting, 'This is Cimombo—he is risen from the dead!'[1] They put him in a hammock and carried him back to his hut in the village amidst wild exultation. They put him on his bed and made him stay there. Later, Mkoka and Ncimbo came in and started to deliver a series of homilies on his position as village headman.[2] They pointed out that from that day he was a chief (*mwenye*), a headman who had the right to wear a scarlet headband (*acimsweni ŵambendera*). [784] Thenceforth, he was not to go to funerals, or at least not into the hut in which a corpse was lying. If his child were to die while he was in the hut he must not move until other people had come in. It was only when a headman of similar rank died that he might go into the hut. They advised him particularly that he would have to look after his village and told him that he should

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[1] *Ce Cimombo [illegible]—[illegible] [illegible].*

[2] *Kuunda miyango*—to teach the customs.

Tingalinga was another well-known performer; he used to do the same tricks as Kambanje. He also was possessed of an elastic skin and is said to have been able "to tie his ears together behind the back of his head." 789 791

Mpochetula, a Yao of Mkanda, is a man with considerable renown. He is said to be able to produce a lion at will from a lion's tail and claw. He would offer to show this if there were any brave enough to go through with it. On a moonlight night, he would expose on the ground in a cleared space near a village the tail of a lion held cross-wise in a piece of split bamboo. At the split end of the bamboo, he would place a lion's claw and round this, a woman's belt held in position by three bamboo pegs, around which he would draw a circle of mkopani flour. Everyone would then withdraw to a hut in which the seance was to take place. After an hour or so, Mpochetula would send some one out to inspect the lion's tail where probably all would be found intact. He might then pretend to be uninterested and sleepy and suggest that some one should go out again in half an hour. Sooner or later, a man would come back, having found the tail gone; then everyone would go out to see what had happened. The pegs would be found in place but the tail and claw gone. A little way off, the split piece of bamboo would be found and further still a bead or two from the woman's belt. These, Mpochetula would pick up, and leaving a little trail of flour on their way, all returned to the hut, while he whistled as if calling some one. Suddenly they would be aroused by the sound as of a lion brushing against the hut walls, as the beasts are known to do, and next, a loud roar. Mpochetula would immediately open the door half-way so that the people could look out into the moonlight and there, a little way off, would be the lion. It would immediately advance towards the house and then, as it prepared to spring for the door, Mpochetula would offer it some of the flour in his left hand, armed with a stirring-stick, mtiko, in his right hand. As the lion landed, he would strike it on the head with the stick and lo and behold! the lion would vanish and the tail and claw would be found in his hand.

Superstitions. Scattered throughout these notes, particularly under *Usasi* and *Disease*, mention is made of practices which show a strong belief in superstition. Below are given a number of minor beliefs, and it is interesting to compare them with many well-known superstitions in other parts of the world. 771 784

1. A child who cuts the upper incisor teeth first will be unlucky. Such children used to be killed by the Yao. (Other tribes make medicine against the threatened ill-luck.) [777]

2. A woman with polydactylism may not take food out of a corn-store. Otherwise the stock of corn will not last long. (Rudimentary sixth fingers are not uncommon.) [732]

3. An insect called *chigoma musi* which lives in the mud at the bottom of pools, if killed causes the water to dry up. [825]

4. If a boy puts a water-spider in the armpit when learning to swim, he will learn quickly.

5. A man wishing to prevent rain falling on a day he is making a journey, will wrap some of the leaves of the *msisumi* tree in his loin cloth and go without drinking. [824]

771 6. It is believed that signs of guilt are visible in the eye of a murderer; medicine is procured in the hope of getting rid of these signs.

●784 7. The possession of the hair of another person is supposed to give the possessor power over that person, hence a medicine man, when the patient he has been treating is cured, shaves the patient and keeps the hair until payment is made.

[826] 8. A native with light greenish-grey eyes is not to be trusted. He is said to have eyes like a cat and is called majerijeri; these eyes are rare among natives.

9. It is unlucky for a child to get into a basket; he may be burned.

10. Should a woman turn the porridge pot upside down, every one who has eaten will become constipated. For the same reason, a woman, after turning out the porridge from the pot, just touches the top of the mass of porridge with the bottom of the pot.

11. A woman will never leave the pounding stick in the grain-mortar. Should she do so, the heavens would fall.

12. When a zebra is killed, a knot is tied in its tail so that eating of the meat shall not cause indigestion.

13. It is unlucky to sit upon a headrest, the msamilo. The person would surely be bitten by a snake.

[843] 14. If a man commits murder, and his wife is pregnant at the time, she must sleep on the spear used.

15. Children are told that they must not eat at night; that if they are hungry, they must lie quiet and try to go to sleep again. If they don't obey and sit up eating porridge, a long hairy arm will come through the fastened door and beg for some, the voice of the

[539] unseen saying:

> "*Ngao chimkuti'cheni nsapo ni mjasa!*"
> "Give me that which you put to your nose to smell and throw away,"

the repeated movements of the hand to the mouth (nose) and back to the pot being supposed to make the "bogey" think that they are not really eating but merely smelling and throwing away the food.

16. A male should not scrape the porridge off the porridge stick; this is only allowed to the woman. Should a man do so, it is supposed that when he goes hunting, he will hit anything he shoots at, only in the tail.

17. There is a saying that the men and boys may eat little pieces of porridge which fall out of the pot, while cooking, on to the supporting stones and it will give them power to escape unhurt from battle. The fragments are called ngalupuka, (from *ku-lupuka* "to escape").

18. Children are instructed to take their food sitting down instead of being in a hurry and standing to take it. They are told that if they do not obey, their porridge will not go into their stomachs but into their legs and swell out their knee-joints.

19. That portion of the gut of animals having folds of mucus membrane inside, may be eaten only by old people past the child-propagating age. If a young woman should eat it, she would have difficulty in labor. 771 784 862

20. It is believed that people who eat too freely of a little fish like whitebait called *matemba* get obstruction of the bowel by the wedging together of the bones. The treatment adopted is to pass up the rectum a smooth stick with a pad of rag at the end. This cannot be done by the person himself and so the aid of another has to be called in; only an intimacy, such as the relationship of brother-in-law gives, will warrant this service being asked.

21. The Yao believe that there is a little insect which lives in the ear, called *chisyene kipilemile*, which tells the person what is said to him, the wax in the ear being its excrement. The pupil is called *mwanache jwa liso*, the child of the eye. 826

22. Among women, the uterus is called *nemeso* (*meso* = eyes); it is supposed to be a little person who holds the foetus. When the child is born, *nemeso* cannot find it and starts looking about, the movements causing the afterpains.

23. A man making his first journey to the coast used to sprinkle himself with water from every stream he crossed to give him a safe journey. In the same way, women at the present day going between Zomba and Blantyre sprinkle their babies with water from each stream. 484

24. An ant-like insect called *ndupatumbe* (*tembetembe*, Chin.) [*diaplebris mephistis*] is lucky. On seeing it a native pats its belly and then rubs his own, wishing for plenty of food that day. If he is embarking on a journey or beginning some enterprise, he will wrap one of these insects in a fold of his loin cloth and take it with him for luck. 825

25. When a native hears the *nsuigo* bird call (its call is like the mew of a cat), if he wants something, he immediately says, "Oh *nsuigo*, I want so-and-so. Be quiet and I will then be quiet, too!" If the bird ceases calling, he knows the wish will be granted. The female bird is said to be the more certain prophet.

26. The snake, *nakalukati*, which lives in trees and is of a buff clay color with green markings, is said by natives to pierce the chest and tie a knot in itself on each side so that it can only be withdrawn by cutting off one knot. When the snake is thus withdrawn, its blood mixes with that of the man and he will die.

27. Natives have a habit of marking the spot where any event takes place by a stone by the side of the path, and every passer-by will add a stone for luck. In this way some large piles of stones have been made. 777

28. A man resting on his way home from a long journey places a stone in the fork between the branches of a nearby tree, so that on his arrival he may find his wife has put by some food for him and has not used up the day's stock of flour.

29. A chameleon found digging in the path is said to presage the death of the finder's nearest relative. 789

771 30. If a chameleon is found holding on to the grass at both sides of the path, the path
784 is "closed" and a man will turn back to his home and not proceed on his journey. It would be unlucky to continue.

784 31. Snakes seen in coils are a bad omen.

771 32. The slow-worm known as *kisumbulo msungulo* ("the cutter open of ant hills"),
784 and the scaly anteater, if seen on the path, are of bad import.

33. To knock the toes against a stone on a journey is bad luck; if blood flows from the big toe, it points to good luck.

34. A man knocking the sole of his foot against a stone knows that some one is speaking ill of him.

35. A person whose hands itch knows he will receive a present.

36. Tremor of the circumorbital muscles of the right eye indicates that something good will be seen. When the left eye is affected, the outcome is less sure.

37. The cry of the bird *ngulukulu* (the green turaco), indicates to the hearer that he is about to meet some one, either friend or enemy.

38. Anyone who kills one of the large stick-insects (*Phasmidae*) known as *chikasa*
771 *chisiga*, will always be breaking the cooking pots afterwards.

784 39. The natives believe that the caterpillar of the *Hippotion osiris* moth will jump at
825 the breast. It is called *chirumbila mawele*, "that which jumps at the breasts," and children seeing it will cover up their nipples with their hands.

40. Of *Linda*, the Mongoose, there is a saying:

[539] "*Linda gapochelangana mbilo!*"
"The banded mongooses relieve each other (at) the races!"

It is said that mongooses assist one another when being hunted. When one is tired, a fresh one runs in so close to the pursuer that he goes after this one and leaves the tired one, and so they keep it up till the pursuer is exhausted.

41. *Chiula*, the frog. Children are told they must never kill a frog, or its spirit will come at night with porridge made of excrement and make them eat it. If a small child playing with a frog kills it by mischance, he will tear off a small piece of his calico cloth and place it by the frog as an offering.

42. *Chindindi* (*likongwe*, Chin.) the weasel. It is said that the weasel hides its body and leaves exposed its anus, so that a chicken seeing it, goes up to peck at it, whereupon the weasel turns round quickly and catches the chicken with its mouth.

43. *Chingeru*, the skunk (from *ku-nya*, to go to stool), so named on account of its odor, is said to apply the anus to a rat-hole and make wind. This will render insensible all the rats in the burrow and he can then dig them out at leisure.

44. *Mkuli*, the honey badger, when hunted is always said to attack a man by attempting to seize the testicles. Natives when they hunt this animal, tie stones in their loin cloths so that they hang down between the legs to defeat the badger.

771

48. A child, when one of its milk teeth drops out, stands some five yards away facing the door of the hut and throws the tooth over the roof of the hut, saying: 784 826 539

"*Ai! likungulo lino lyuna-dyo, mbeni lyangu lyambone 'lya'*"
"Oh! crow tooth your there is, give me my of good one!"

Religion. The matter of the religious beliefs professed by natives of East Central Africa is one beset with many difficulties to the student of today. It has been the subject of many essays by workers in the missionary field, but the wide contact of the natives of Nyasaland with missionary effort during the past thirty years has done much to confuse the problem, and one feels that many missionaries in their writings rather color the picture with their own feelings. 771

I think probably the Yao with whom I am now concerned have a truer conception of their own beliefs than many of the subject tribes among whom mission teaching has more easily taken root. The religious beliefs of a people are to a large extent the reflection of the circumstances under which that people lives. The outstanding event to all natives is death. At death, something is lost to the body, without which life is impossible. This is the *msimu* which may be translated "soul" or "spirit." The *msimu* is said to leave the body of the dying man when he becomes moribund or unconscious. It appears that this same *msimu* may leave the body during unconscious states unassociated with death, as when a man faints, in epilepsy, and during sleep. 771 761 774

Apart from this evidence of the dissociation of the *msimu* from the living body, the Yao believe that a man's shadow is an objective manifestation of the soul and they will say "the shadow is the *msimu*." Fear is experienced if a man jumps on the shadow of his fellow. Light is also thrown on the constitution of the *msimu* by the belief in a certain evil-spirit which dwells in deep pools. It is called *chimala-mesi*, which means "one who may finish (drink up) all the water." The superstition regarding this evil spirit is that it can suck the blood from your shadow as you stand at the edge of the pool, till you become so weak that you fall in and are drowned. 774 774 776

After leaving the body at death, the *msimu* goes to take up its place in the spirit-world, occupying a position corresponding to that held by the man during his life. With a truly materialistic conception, the soul is supposed to have all the attributes of the dead man, to be wealthy in proportion as the man was so on earth, and its relative position will be identical with that which he held among the living. The tribal chief becomes a paramount chief in the spirit world, the lesser chief holds sway in his lesser capacity, etc. We shall see that in intercession, when the tribe is threatened with calamities, it is the late paramount chief who is appealed to for help, and when one feudal chief is at war with another, the chief's dead predecessor will be called upon for aid. When a village is moved, it is from the spirit of the dead headman of the village that success in the enterprise is sought. Similarly, in family trouble, some dead ancestor is entreated to set things right, while a native 775

The men and boys now pass through the arch in order of seniority; each splashes 751
himself with the water in the trough, but neither speaks nor rinses the mouth. The 796
women come next, led by the head-wife of the chief; the latter rinses her mouth and, instructed by the doctor, repeats a prayer similar to that offered by her husband. The remainder of the women merely splash themselves, like the men, before passing through the arch. All then return to the village, where the *[illegible]* is continued.

Finally the doctor takes the hammer-head from the trough and hands it to the chief, who refits the haft into it, and, a hoe having been placed on the ground, goes through the form of forging the latter by beating it with the hammer. He then scrapes the ground with the hoe as if clearing a place overgrown with grass; he does not dig with it as in hoeing up the ground for planting seed. After this rite the chief again bathes in medicated water similar to that in the trough, and the ceremony is complete.

Whereas the *[illegible]* ceremony and its adjunct, the rite of the arch, are now [178]
but rarely performed, no Yao will omit the rite of purification after a death in his 751
family. This ceremony consists of two essential parts, both protective against 764
the *[illegible]*, a disease characterised by dropsy and supposed to be contracted by 796
contact with a corpse, or by association, especially by sharing a meal, with those who 783
have been in such contact. The first of these parts is bathing in certain medicines, which protects the bather from *[illegible]*, and the second consists of a sort of communion meal, shared by all friends and especially relatives with those who have been contaminated, and designed to protect those friends and relatives.

The decoction for bathing is made by soaking the roots of *[illegible]* and 751
[illegible] in water, together with the bark of *[illegible]*, one piece each from the 783
east and west aspects of the tree; the water assumes a reddish tint, and the whole 824
body is bathed.

765

The communion meal consists of porridge made from any kind of flour or of [262]
rice, and some *[illegible]* beans. In the latter some scorched and powdered root of *[illegible]* is mixed, with a little salt. All near relatives of the deceased must partake of this meal, as well as their wives and their near relatives; part is carefully put aside for the use of any relative unable to be present at the ceremony.

Latterly, since the spread of Islam among the WaYao, this rite has become [177]
confused with the distribution of food to the poor at the funeral of a Muslim, and [797]
the Arabic word *sadaka* ("charity") is now generally used for it, to the exclusion of its wider, correct meaning.

It may be mentioned here that after the death of a child the father is denied 765
access to his wife for a period of about three weeks, and the first act must be one 784
of *coitus interruptus*.

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